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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANTANANARIVO 000359

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [MA](#) [UN](#) [EU](#) [AU](#)
SUBJECT: MADAGASCAR: EU DIALOGUE AND TGV'S COMING TRAVELS

REF: ANTAN 353

Classified By: AMBASSADOR NIELS MARQUARDT FOR REASONS 1.4 B AND D.

1. (C) The May 19 Madagascar-EU "Political Dialogue" appears to have helped sober up the HAT and its President about the possible realities that lie ahead for them. The EU, led competently by Czech Ambassador Petr Kopriva, promised that the "120 day clock" for article 96 consultations is about to begin, at the end of which "appropriate measures" (read sanctions) will be triggered if there is not a substantial improvement in respect for the rule of law, human rights, and democratic principles. The HAT suggested to the EU holding a combined constitutional referendum and legislative elections by December 2009, followed by a Presidential election in May, 2010. The EU expressed its full support for the consensual "Transition Charter" now being negotiated under joint UN/AU auspices here. The manipulated local press portrayed the dialogue as a step toward recognition, but the EU told the HAT bluntly that it will take much more than that. Meanwhile, the AU and UN resumed a multilateral discussion today among representatives of the various Malagasy political families. UN Mediator Drame responded in the press to Ravalomanana's stated lack of confidence in Drame by explaining the impartial role of the UN in pushing the Malagasy to make concessions. TGV, for his part, announced today in the press that he will leave imminently for Dakar, Algiers, and Rabat. The visit to Dakar is now set for May 28, the one to Algiers remains a mere project, and the Moroccans have pushed the HAT off. TGV may still intend to visit New York for the June 1-3 UN conference on the financial crisis, perhaps going there between Dakar and Algiers. End Summary.

2. (C) The EU met for over two hours at the Iavaloha Palace on May 19 with HAT President Andry Rajoelina and his entire cabinet. The meeting was chaired by TGV on the HAT side, and by Czech ambassador to Brussels Petr Koprova on the EU Presidency side (sitting in TDY for the ailing Czech ambassador to Addis). The resident EU, French, and German ambassadors were joined by non-resident colleagues representing the UK, Spain, Netherlands, and Belgium. According to UK Ambassador John Murton (whose views closely mirror those of the US), the talks sent an unmistakably firm message to the HAT authorities that sanctions -- not recognition -- will follow if they don't take urgent steps to reach a consensual political agreement and better respect the

rule of law, democratic principles, and human rights (Cotonou Principles). They said unambiguously that the dialogue did not in any way confer recognition, and avoided the ambiguous use of Presidential and Ministerial titles when addressing their HAT interlocutors. Murton said the Czech, who did almost all the talking for the EU, laid out the 120-day calendar -- to being almost immediately -- for harsher consultations under Article 96 of the Cotonou Accords, rather than the milder Article 8 consultations under which this meeting took place. The EU implored the HAT to make whatever additional concessions are necessary to conclude the "Transition Charter" now under negotiation.

13. (C) For its part, the HAT suggested holding a combined constitutional referendum and legislative elections before the end of 2009, probably in November or December (due to cyclone season which begins shortly thereafter), followed by Presidential elections in May 2010 (after the cyclone season ends). The EU delegation, having been briefed beforehand by local diplomats, was well aware of the USG demand for elections before the end of 2009, as well as the ticking AGOA eligibility timeclock, among other real-world time constraints. The EU reportedly responded to HAT suggestions that the USG was "being too tough" by asserting that, in fact, the EU, the US, and the entire international community are all in agreement on the urgency of holding elections. That said, there is strong suspicion here that the French had given their prior accord to the HAT -- offstage -- that presidential elections by May would be acceptable. (Note: The AU/UN position on the timing of elections remains unchanged: that a team of international experts should come

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to Madagascar as soon as possible after the Transition Charter is signed to make their own objective assessment and practical recommendations on how early credible elections could be held.)

14. (C) The self-censoring, manipulated local press uniformly ran stories and photos on the dialogue that, like the recent TGV trip to Libya, were intended to convey a strong impression of quasi-recognition, or imminent recognition, of the HAT by the EU. They quoted widely from HAT Prime Minister Roindefa putting a nice gloss on the meeting and neglecting to mention the blunt substance of the actual exchange. An EU Press Conference held today may contribute to a more balanced picture tomorrow, but the media generally are showing a strong pro-HAT bias in everything they (dare) report.

15. (C) Today's papers also announced TGV's imminent travel to Dakar, Algiers, and Rabat, the latter reportedly at the explicit invitation of the King of Morocco. The Senegalese ambassador confirmed to Ambassador Marquardt that the trip to Dakar has been postponed until May 28, but is "on." The Algerian Charge said there was an ongoing discussion of a "project", but no agreement yet on whether or when. The Moroccan ambassador showed Ambassador Marquardt the exchange of diplomatic notes in which they asked for a meeting this week, to which he replied that neither the King nor Prime Minister would be available in the requested timeframe. Offended deeply by the presumption of an audience with His Majesty and by the premature and inaccurate press release announcing the invitation and visit, the Moroccan ambassador privately made clear that there will be no TGV visit to Morocco, period. Once source advised that TGV is thinking of stopping in Algiers on his way back from the UN conference on the financial crisis, to be held June 1-3 in New York.

16. (C) Meanwhile, the Special Envoys for the UN, AU, SADC, and OIF convened in secrecy the first multilateral meeting in over a month with representatives of the four main political families today. The next ICG-M meeting on Friday morning will provide a read-out on what may have been accomplished in those discussions. UN Envoy Tiebile Drame gave a press interview yesterday in which he responded publicly to former

President Ravalomanana's recent ad hominem attack on Drame's impartiality -- for having suggested that all previous (and current) heads of state abstain from running in the next presidential election. Drame explained that there is no "UN Project", but rather there is a common effort supported by the UN, AU, SADC, and all other ICG-M participants.

MARQUARDT